

UMN Conflict Sensitivity Policy

August 2012

1.0 Rationale

Conflict sensitivity is one of the four cross-cutting issues in UMN's 2010-15 strategic plan. The policy is necessary because:

- a) Conflict continues to occur at all levels of society in Nepal, despite Nepal being classified as post conflict due to the end of the civil war. It is one of the root causes of poverty.
- b) Development patterns have been affected in various ways by the civil conflict (cf Bonino and Donini¹) and continue to be affected by on-going issues of conflict. Therefore, conflict must be addressed if people are to experience fullness of life.
- c) Development Organisations in Nepal are applying different mainstreaming practices to take account of this new context, and UMN needs to consider their relevance to our work.
- d) As a Christian organisation, we need to take seriously the biblical mandate to be peacemakers and to work towards reconciliation in all areas of life.

UMN is committed to work in ways which build new and respectful relationships among beneficiaries, partners and staff. Conflict is endemic at all levels, and where people are suffering acute poverty, we realise that our development programmes are desperately needed. However, if programmes are not carefully planned and managed in a conflict sensitive way, they can contribute to conflict, prolong broken relationships, or even create new conflicts between our development partners and their communities.

Experience from other actors working in conflict demonstrates that even with the best of intentions we can do harm as well as good in our development programmes. The diverse people of Nepal need opportunities to knit and weave their diversity into a strong new nationwide vision where differences are seen as a source of richness rather than a threat. As a development organisation, we want our programmes to provide as many opportunities as possible for people to meet and be enriched by each other and to celebrate their diversity. This policy sets out our objectives and method for a conflict sensitive approach to development.

The key objectives of this UMN Conflict Sensitivity Policy are to:

- a) help UMN create opportunities to build connections between different interest groups for peace building and sustainable development;
- b) reduce the negative effects of existing conflicts;
- c) prevent conflicts being created during our programme interventions;
- d) support communities to deal with conflict issues positively.

It involves;

- a) Understanding the context within which UMN works, particularly with respect to conflict dynamics
- b) Understanding the interaction between UMN programme interventions and the conflict context
- c) Acting upon the understanding and analysis of this interaction, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts

¹ Aid and Violence: development policies and conflict in Nepal. Bonino,F; Donini,A. (2009)

2.0 Related References

- UMN Strategic Plan 2010-15
- UMN People Management Framework
- Other policies of UMN

3.0 Principles

3.1 We should seek to contribute to peace and harmony at all times, through our work, and through our lives outside of work. This contribution can include all we say and do, while recognizing that conflict is sometimes a necessary part of creating a more just and peaceful society, as long as it is dealt with in a sensitive manner.

3.2 We should recognise and celebrate diversity. This implies that we treat diversity as an opportunity to be enriched by others, rather than as a source of conflict.

3.3 Conflicts are best resolved by the parties concerned, and should be attended to early before the conflict escalates.

3.4 We take Jesus' command to love our enemies seriously and encourage others to do the same

3.5 Everyone should be treated fairly.

4.0 Definitions of terms used in this policy

Conflict sensitivity: An awareness of the causes of historical, actual or potential conflict, and the likelihood of further conflict, including its likely severity; and acting to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts of intervention on conflict, within UMN's priorities/objectives.

Violence: behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone; or showing great emotional force.

Coercion: using force, or the threat of force, to gain compliance from others.

5.0 Policy

5.1 Internal

- a) UMN is not associated with any one political party and seeks to be non-political-party-affiliated in all it does. Therefore, while individual staff may have strong personal views on political issues, staff should not promote their own political views or those of any political ideology in any way that could be understood as reflecting the views of UMN.
- b) As an organisation, we are against the use of violence and coercion and we are committed to justice, reconciliation and peace. Therefore, UMN staff must not use violent or coercive behaviour, or provoke others to use such behaviour within UMN, with the partners or in the communities.
- c) We will do all in our power to minimise the negative effects of conflict. We aim to bring hope even during difficult times and will support our partners as they strive and work for this in their communities. Therefore, every individual staff member should seek to be humble and model UMN's values.

Non-compliance with these requirements will be addressed by UMN's People Management Framework.

5.2 External

In implementing our programmes, we will pay special attention to the following issues and approaches to ensure conflict sensitive service delivery:

- a) Participatory process at all stages of the project cycle
- b) Consider the perceptions and issues of all relevant actors
- c) Consistency with organizational values which includes “special concern for poor and marginalized”
- d) Transparency
- e) Respect for people’s own perception of conflict and suffering
- f) Accountability
- g) Partnership and co-ordination
- h) Coherence i.e internally logical, and externally takes existing structures into account
- i) Timeliness

The following issues should be considered carefully in the design of interventions as they have been identified as “danger areas” that could lead to conflict:

- a) Security level of context
- b) Project methodology and inputs to decision making by different actors
- c) Location choice
- d) Nature and type of intervention
- e) Size and scale of activity
- f) Timing of activities
- g) Ownership
- h) Identification of key stakeholders and selection of beneficiaries

6.0 Implementation

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working for UMN. Partners will be encouraged to follow this policy and/or develop their own.

6.1 Managerial

6.1.1 DO:

- a) Amend this policy as needed
- b) Ensure all staff are aware of this policy
- c) Consult with appropriate parties when making decisions, accepting challenges and being supportive of staff
- d) Conduct “Safe and Effective Development in Conflict” (SEDC)² analysis including all Team Leaders on a regular basis for review, reflection, and to mitigate negative impacts
- e) Link policy with security and organizational development risks as and when necessary through a task group, and make clear to Technical Advisers and Technical Officers how the policy relates to relevant technical areas and approaches
- f) Integrate conflict sensitivity in baseline studies
- g) Document conflict sensitive concerns in reports
- h) Ensure Do No Harm/SEDC orientation is given to staff as needed
- i) Be committed to choosing partners whose values do not conflict with those of UMN

6.1.2 DO NOT:

- a) Allow social or political bias or discrimination within the organisation.
- b) Ignore legitimate concerns and issues raised by UMN related people and partners.

² SEDC is a reflective tool consisting of three major components: do no harm; security issues; and good governance. This tool was developed by GTZ and DFID for Nepal during the war period but continues to be relevant for UMN

- c) Approve project proposals that have not considered “conflict sensitivity”

6.2 At the cluster/operational level

6.2.1 DO:

- a) Ensure all cluster staff understand the policy
- b) Integrate conflict sensitivity throughout the project cycle as outlined below
- c) Report programme concerns at the relevant management and technical team level
- d) Look at all partner plans and budgets through a conflict sensitive lens using the appropriate tools
- e) Commit to fully supporting decisions that have been made in an inclusive way
- f) Conduct Do No Harm orientation with staff and executive board of partners during the first year of partnership, and then annually
- g) Redesign programmes/activities if negative impacts are seen as a result of the Do No Harm analysis
- h) Work and act in a way which builds harmony and peace with work colleagues

In the Project Cycle

Planning:

- a) Conduct a conflict analysis i.e. the systematic study of the profile, causes, and dynamics of conflict. This should be conducted as part of any project design, and during annual planning with partners. Peacebuilding Officers in clusters will be responsible for this.
- b) Ensure all partner programmes have relevant baselines, Participatory Capacity Assessments and Technical Capacity Assessments (conducted with partners before, during and at the end of the partnership process). This will ensure that all interventions are “evidence informed” and not based on personal bias.
- c) Ensure partner programmes are inclusive and that, as far as is reasonably practicable, beneficiaries are chosen according to clear, objective poverty criteria. No group or person will be excluded simply on the basis of sex, caste, religion or political belief
- d) Use the “Do No Harm” and other relevant tools (such as UMN’s risk benefits analysis tool) during planning the programmes or events before or after the activity as necessary.

Implementation:

- (a) Keep the conflict analysis under regular review. Observe changes closely to see if they affect the programme implementation. Check and manage any issues that arise concerning targeting, staffing, information networks, contracting etc.
- (b) Conduct SEDC (cluster level) and Do No Harm (partner level) analysis annually, and share reports for the review and reflection of cluster programmes and to mitigate negative impacts.
- (c) Adjust the project in light of new information gathered, focusing on the objectives and the process of implementation.

Monitoring:

Conflict sensitive monitoring will introduce indicators that will enable the project to make timely adjustments. These will maximise gains and minimise negative effects of conflict.

Evaluation:

- a) Integrate a detailed understanding of the actors, profile, causes and dynamics of conflict into the existing evaluation activities and processes. This will help clarify the overall impact a given intervention has had on the context, and the impact that the context has had on the project.

- b) A conflict sensitive evaluation will help clarify how the context has changed over time and will measure the interaction between the context and the intervention.
- c) Care must be taken when deciding to what extent the positive or negative effects can be attributed to the project itself or other factors.

6.2.2 DO NOT:

- a) Ignore opportunities to improve relationships and challenge stereotypes
- b) Forget to make whatever changes are necessary and approved to ensure good development practice
- c) Take conflict sensitivity as an unnecessary extra workload but see it as part of all programme components, and essential for sustainable development and good governance
- d) Ignore the importance of conflict sensitivity in programme planning
- e) Set development programmes as a fixed intervention, but build in flexibility to redesign and change according to reflection and review through the conflict sensitive tools.

6.3 Supporting Local Partners in the Resolution of Conflict

UMN will provide opportunities for UMN and partner staff training in conflict prevention, transformation and management. Within UMN and partners there are trained mediators who are willing to help people resolve conflicts. An up-to-date list will be maintained by the Peace-Building Team.

6.4 Working together

When any UMN person has a concern with another UMN person or someone in a partner organisation, they should in the first place seek to resolve the issue with the person or partner. If this is unsuccessful, or not possible, or not appropriate (e.g. in cases of sexual harassment) then the person (if UMN staff) should follow the grievance procedures as outlined in the People Management Framework.

7.0 Change History

Date	Status/Modification	Approved by
22.8.12	Conflict Sensitivity policy approved	Leadership Team